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**– J. David Donahue**

## Paving a Path to Successful Prisoner Re-Entry

### Commissioner J. David Donahue Introduces New Business Model To Indiana Corrections

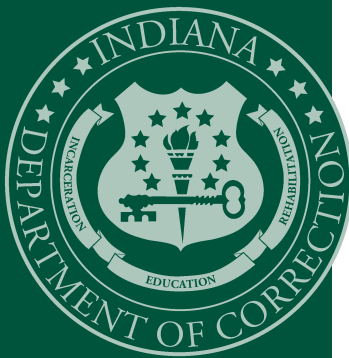
The Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) serves a growing adult population of over 24,000 offenders and a juvenile population of approximately 1,000 offenders. The Department releases over 16,000 adult offenders and over 1,200 juvenile offenders each year. Thirty-five percent of the adult offender releases return to Marion County, Indianapolis, and the 7 surrounding counties. Similarly, 39% of the juvenile offender releases return to the same counties.

The current recidivism rates in Indiana are 39.3% for adults and 32.8% for juveniles. Recidivism is defined as a return to the IDOC system within 3 years of release. J. David Donahue has said, "If we can reduce our rate of recidivism by 5 percent, we save over 80 million dollars for the taxpayers of Indiana. That is our goal."

### PLAINFIELD RE-ENTRY AND EDUCATIONAL FACILITY

IDOC has made significant strides to assure that offenders have the opportunity for a successful return to their communities. With the opening of the Plainfield Re-entry Educational Facility (PREF), Indiana has broken new ground on its "Road to Re-entry" program for adult male offenders. This facility is the first of its kind in the country. The facility focuses on education and vocational skill building during the final 18 months of incarceration. To further lessen the shock of re-entry, the facility also creates a setting that is as close to community living as possible. Targeting other high risk re-entry communities in the future, the agency also plans to open additional re-entry facilities around the state.

Offenders assigned to PREF will be returning to Marion County, Hendricks County, and the eight other Central Indiana Counties. Although most of the offenders at PREF are being prepared for release after serving sentences of more than 10 years, there are also some inmates at PREF that will be finishing sentences of more than 50 years. The world is changing at an accelerated rate, and there is a growing importance that these soon-to-be-free citizens at PREF evolve from an institutional prison setting, in which they make very few decisions, to having the ability to exist in a community requiring endless decision-making ability.



## INNOVATIVE PROGRAMMING

The Department has several other innovative programs designed to reduce recidivism rates, including the first ever dedicated rehabilitation program for offenders with methamphetamine-related problems. These CLIFF (Clean Lifestyle is Freedom Forever) therapeutic units assist offenders in their recovery from drug addictions, as well as provide them with a positive environment where they can learn the social and cognitive skills necessary to remain drug free. The CLIFF program is the first housing unit in the country dedicated solely to the treatment of methamphetamine offenders. The ideas and approach of the CLIFF program are ones that have now been modeled by other states. In addition, in June of 2005, IDOC opened the first PLUS (Purposeful Living Units Serve) units. The PLUS units are for participants whom hope to make a change through either learning positive attributes of character values, or through their own professed faith. The Department currently has 12 PLUS units serving over 1,200 offenders and juveniles. Both the CLIFF and PLUS units were opened with existing dollars and staff.

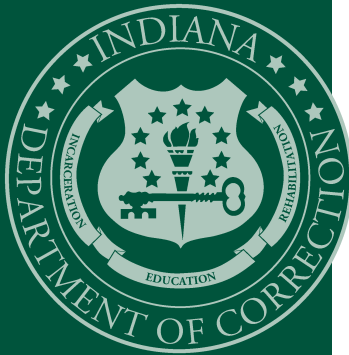
## LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT

Under the leadership of Governor Mitch Daniels, offender re-entry is one of this administration's highest public safety priorities. Through example, Governor Daniels has spear-headed the efforts of other state agencies in their re-entry efforts. One partnership facilitated by Governor Daniels to assist the re-entry process is that created between IDOC and the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles. This partnership has enabled the placement of a "branch office" at the PREF facility so that offenders can be issued state identification cards. Issuing offenders an identification card provides them with the proper identification to cash checks, enter into a rental agreement, obtain employment, and apply for and receive other services necessary for a successful return to society. Eventually all offenders will have the opportunity to return to their communities with proper identification.

The Department is also in the process of setting up a pre-release application process for Medicaid. A committee has been formed which includes individuals representing necessary human services, along with entities such as Vocational Rehabilitation, Child Support and Paternity, Medicare and Mental Health and Addiction. Eligibility criteria have been identified for these benefits and services in an attempt to provide guidance to IDOC staff.

## CHALLENGES: EMPLOYMENT, HOUSING, FINANCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

Indiana is making strides in reducing the barriers to re-entry. However, there are many obstacles that are yet to be overcome. Aiding in the ability to overcome obstacles is the significant focus by the National Governor's Association on prisoner re-entry. Two major re-entry barriers identified are those re-entry barriers associated with employment and housing.



With regard to the employment of ex-offenders, the Department has increased the number of certified vocational trades offered to offenders. However, an issue to be addressed is the fact that there are still many business communities that are reluctant to hire ex-offenders. Expanding job opportunities and matching those opportunities with eligible offenders is a tremendous need essential to ensuring an ex-offenders successful re-entry into society.

Housing is another significant barrier for ex-offenders attempting to re-enter and mainstream themselves into a community. Many rules restrict offenders from entering public housing. Clearly this is also a major impact on offender families whom live in such housing. Some of these restrictions may be minimized with appropriate state legislative action.

Another key area that has been identified is offender financial debt assessment. Many offenders have debts that prohibit or inhibit them from receiving benefits upon release. IDOC is working on a plan to determine an offender's debt status upon incarceration. Then, as part of the offender's Re-entry Accountability Plan (RAP) the offender can work toward paying the debts they owe during their period of incarceration.

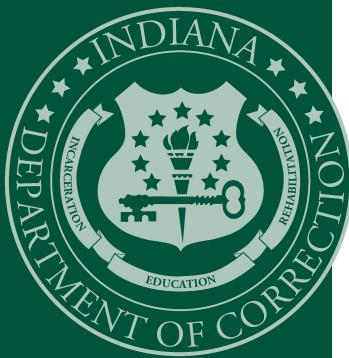
***The partners on board with the department's mission include state agencies such as:***

Bureau of Motor Vehicles; Indiana Council for Community Mental Health Centers, Inc.; Department of Education; Department of Natural Resources; Department of Transportation; Department of Veterans' Affairs; Department of Workforce Development; Indiana Judicial Center; Indiana Legal Services; Indiana Parole Board; Prosecuting Attorney's Council; Public Defender Council; State Personnel Department; Indiana State Police; Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives; Office of the Public Defender; State Budget Agency and the U.S. Attorney's Office.

***Some of the efforts already in place by these agencies enhancing the re-entry efforts include:***

- The Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCDA) helps communities build upon their assets, which creates places with ready access to opportunities, goods, and services. IHCDA supports a broad range of housing solutions ranging from temporary shelters to homeownership. IHCDA has developed a state action plan to end chronic homelessness. This plan includes as one of its top strategies ensuring that individuals are not being released or discharged from state and local facilities or institutions into homelessness.
- The Family and Social Services Administration, Division of Mental Health and Addiction, currently has a multi-agency committee looking at inter-agency collaboration at the state level. This committee is exploring opportunities for blended funding, examining the elimination of duplication of efforts and examining possible collaborative projects. One project undertaken is an interest across child service systems to adopt a common

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tool and decision support process to improve the quality and consistency of services provided to families and children with behavioral health needs. The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool has been tailored for Indiana to focus on the needs and strengths of children and their families. This process is in the very early stages of development. Although some agencies have already begun using the tool, the actual implementation date for multiple agencies is July 1, 2007. IDOC will begin using the CANS in its juvenile population on October, 2006. Furthermore, a similar tool is being examined for the adult population.

- IDOC and the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) have entered into discussions to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). An agreement between the two agencies will enable the stationing of a DWD employee at the Plainfield Re-entry Education Facility (PREF) on a full-time permanent basis. The DWD employee would assist offenders at PREF in finding employment in their communities, as well as offer workshops to help prepare the offenders for re-entry into the workforce. The workshops would cover such skills as writing resumes, interviewing, and how to dress appropriately for interviews.
- DWD also offers Workers Opportunity Tax Credit certifications. The IDOC intends to work with DWD in an effort to market this opportunity to employers so that more jobs are available to offenders upon release.
- In partnership with the US Department of Labor, IDOC and its prison industries, PEN Products, recently announced an apprenticeship program at a print shop within the Wabash Valley Correctional Facility. Upon completion of this program offenders will be certified to work in certain areas of the printing industry, which allows them a better opportunity to obtain jobs upon release.
- To assist in the identification process, the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH), Department of Vital Records has signed a MOU with the IDOC to permit the transfer of birth certificates. Birth Certificates are an essential item to assist in the obtainment of identification pieces such as driver's licenses.
- In addition, the ISDH will be pursuing health education classes at five facilities as part of the re-entry process. These classes help inform offenders about important topics such as Chronic Disease Management and Healthy Lifestyle Choices, and emphasize nutrition and tobacco cessation, as well as sexually transmitted diseases. The ISDH also provides lists of local health departments, community health centers, and free clinics. With this information offenders will know where they can find medical and dental care at reduced costs in the community they will be released into.
- The Indiana Criminal Justice Institute (ICJI) distributes millions of federal dollars each year to local entities for drug and crime programs, as well as for programs available to the youth and victims. These community programs are available to offenders when they return home.

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*“Re-Entry is our  
Business”*

– J. David Donahue

## COMMUNICATING CHANGE

The IDOC has created a re-entry website, distributed posters, pamphlets, and cards on reentry efforts, and developed public service announcements and press releases. Commissioner J. David Donahue has held many public meetings across the state to communicate its reentry efforts and activities. Speaking of the importance of community involvement, Governor Daniels has accompanied Commissioner Donahue to several public meetings.

Developing a systemic re-entry process is vital to every state. The ability to bring state agencies together to such an academy will educate everyone that re-entry is a statewide inter-disciplinary issue that affects each community and also each person within that community.

The promotion of public safety is best achieved through the partnership of intra-state agencies and the public, as well as the education of both society and those seeking a second chance. Recidivism is kept to a minimum when offenders realize change is possible and the community is there to assist them in realizing that change.

***It's all about promoting public safety and a second chance for [changed] offenders.***